

DOE finds Hanford Price-Anderson program 'effective'

The DOE Office of Enforcement conducted a two-day review of the Fluor Hanford Price-Anderson Amendments Act program and concluded that it was effective overall. The Office of Enforcement has reviewed similar programs across the nation, and the Hanford assessment was one of the most recent.

The review included an evaluation of site processes to screen for noncompliances under Price-Anderson, plus the reporting and tracking in the DOE Noncompliance Tracking System and local internal tracking systems, and timely correction of deficiencies.

Program strengths and weaknesses were identified in a Jan. 14 letter to Fluor Hanford from Stephen Sohinki, director of the DOE Office of Price-Anderson Enforcement.

"It is the mission of the Nuclear Safety Regulatory Compliance organization to provide overall direction and leadership to the Project Hanford Management Contract with respect to the PAAA, and to assure compliance with 10 CFR 820, Procedural Rules for DOE Nuclear Activities, and associated nuclear safety regulations," said Donna Busche, Fluor Hanford vice president of Safety and Mission Assurance.

The nuclear safety regulatory compliance officers reporting to Busche assist the various project-management teams in identifying and reporting potential Price-Anderson noncompliances and ensuring that they're evaluated and corrected in a timely manner.

Strengths identified in the review included strong senior management program ownership and involvement; formal procedures that adequately address all Price-Anderson program areas; sufficient staffing by personnel who are knowledgeable and well-qualified; extensive screening by compliance officers for potential Price-Anderson noncompliances; effective tracking and closure of noncompliances through integration with the site-wide Corrective Action Management process; and independent verification closure package reviews by the compliance officers.

"The ability to demonstrate to the regulators our firm commitment to identifying, correcting and preventing future potential nuclear and radiological safety noncompliances results in a higher degree of confidence in our programs," Busche said. "Voluntarily reporting, evaluating and correcting our deficiencies in a timely manner can substantially reduce potential fines and penalties. The review identified the continuing commitment of management to ensure that appropriate processes are in place to address the continued safety of the Hanford workforce."

Price-Anderson protects workers, the public

The purpose of the Price-Anderson Amendments Act is to promote and protect the health and safety of the public and workers by ensuring compliance with applicable nuclear safety requirements. It provides positive incentives for effective compliance-assurance programs and encourages continuous overall improvement of operations.

The original Price-Anderson Act was signed into law in 1957. It indemnifies DOE contractors that manage and conduct nuclear activities. Through this act, the government acts as "insurer" for contractors against any findings of liability arising from nuclear activities within the scope of the contract. The Amendment Act is used to police contractor programs.

All DOE contractors, subcontractors and suppliers conducting nuclear activities for DOE are required to maintain Price-Anderson programs. They are subject to civil and criminal penalties for violations of nuclear safety requirements.

Continued on page 8.

DOE finds Hanford Price-Anderson program 'effective', cont.

Several areas were identified for improvement, including the need for a trending process to identify repetitive or programmatic Price-Anderson issues, and a need for consistency and timeliness across the projects in completing corrective actions.

"We are working to improve the processes surrounding the areas identified for improvement," Busche said. "As part of our continuous-improvement process, this evaluation will be put through the Corrective Action Management program and improvement actions will be assigned."

For more information, see the DOE Price-Anderson Enforcement Program Web site at <http://tis-nt.eh.doe.gov/enforce/>. ■